

Third Transmission: 2018 on the Way Out

This year has kicked my ass. I've never felt so conflicted about what I should be doing or feeling. On the downer side, it's seemed like everything I couldn't have expected to go wrong did. Unforeseen family crises and health issues, losing two of my best and oldest friends of the animal variety, various disgust and malaise regarding the state of the country and the world. But for each of the many low points, there have been equally unexpected highs that did their best to outweigh the negatives, as pervasive as those may have been. I started shooting film again, something I never planned or expected to do after college, and I'm even pretty happy with the reels of grainy Super 8 I came up with. I finally graduated from the basement and played a handful of shows (even got paid once!) that didn't embarrass me. And I've now put out three issues of this zine, which makes this by far my most productive year on this earth, even as everything else seems to be rotting and crumbling. Oh, and I'm a grad student now.

Issue three here pretty much follows the format of the last two, and our focus is just about the same as always: underground film, children's books, food and the ways it affects us, and wrestling. Our layout is still bad, but our writing continues to improve. We have some plans and a few completed pieces in the wings for the next couple issues to change things up a bit, so be sure to watch for that, whenever the hell I actually get them together. As per usual, everyone else had their features in on time, it was just my slow-moving ass that held up the finished product. Credit again to Research for his cover art, and Freeman for his enthusiasm in getting his shit in before anyone else.

The feature this time around is a bit darker than we're used to. Whether that's a reflection of my own mental state, or everything happening around me is up for debate. It was an easy decision to dig into *First Transmission* and its cavalcade of perversions, although five thousand words and four hours' viewing time later I still have some questions about my choice. I'm still not sure how I feel about the tape, and I know this isn't going to convince anyone else to watch it. But I have listened to "Hamburger Lady" a lot more lately as a result.

The obscure hip-hop run-down is something I've wanted to do for a while now, and even as I've moved onto other music for the most part, I can happily state that these thirteen tracks never leave my current playlists. Let me know if you want the songs, I'm more than happy to pass them along.

Research's updated batch of food mishaps serve as a nice reprisal of our most popular feature so far, and I'm sure the brevity of the update won't disappoint given its entertainment value. The wrestling lists are the sort of in-depth, obsessive compilations you've come to expect. Man watches a lot of pro wrestling, and I don't trust anyone else's opinion as much as his. It takes some serious effort and dedication to be that devoted and thorough, and we should all applaud his work. The stalker movie compendium is a nice slice of life, in that I can't stress how many times I've come home to find the man watching teen thriller flicks. It's a big interest of his, and it's certainly unlike anything else I've seen out there lately.

MC Freeman (or is it Blaze Runner now?) comes with another hard-hitting, in-depth investigation of the children's book series that shaped us all. Or at least if you grew up with

Snacks that Can Go Fuck Themselves

by Big Vin Vader

If you're unfortunate enough to know me, then you know that I have many opinions, the majority of which are quite unpopular. Well, here are just a few of my most recent controversial thoughts that I felt the need to share with the captive public. Certain snacks, popular and neglected alike, just piss me off, and it's about time I did something to address that situation. This is the trouble with allowing me an outlet such as this to spread my thoughts. You know where to direct hatemail, so let's hear from the public over this one. All opinions expressed herein are the editor's alone.

1. Kettle Chips

I'll admit that every once in a while I'll indulge in kettle chips, so it isn't the snack itself that irritates me. Rather, it's their ubiquity; every goddamn chip you're likely to encounter in public is kettle cooked these days. Who in the hell thought this was a good idea? Is there really that much demand to eat greasy slabs of fucking slate rock disguised as potato crisps, or is somebody pulling our legs? All I know is, this shit has gotta stop. Give me some Lay's. Or Conn's. Even a damn bag of Mike Sells.

2. Sourdough Pretzels

Soft pretzels are the finest snack on this planet, and there's little reason to dispute a fact like that. Their bastard children, in the form of rock hard sourdough knots, however, are about the worst things I can think of. If kettle chips are the equivalent of eating shale, these assholes are like chunks of granite. Nothing against the sourdough nuggets, at least you can chew those. But the three-inch twists that every seventy-year-old uncle devours while watching the History Channel (or just mine), ought to be banned.

3. Ice Cream

Just like with kettle chips, this isn't an outright declaration, but rather a conditional one. Ice cream is fine, for the most part and in moderation. But what it is not is a goddamn summer snack. Why in the hell would I want to be stuck in 90+ degree heat, then gulp down a fucking half pint or more of heavy cream? Yeah, great idea, I love walking around feeling like puking on top of being dehydrated. What an awful idea. Give me a damn Slush Puppy.

4. Nutella

Hazelnuts are the worst nuts I'm not allergic to. Get the hell out of here.

12. Downtown Science—"Radioactive" (1991)

This was the group whose work I had the hardest time narrowing down to just one song. Downtown Science released one album on Def Jam in 1991, had three singles released with music videos, but did nothing commercially and disappeared. It's a huge shame, because MC Bosco Money was incredibly talented, with a commanding vocal presence, impressive vocabulary, and top-notch technique, standing out as probably the best pure rapper on this list. Producer/DJ Sam Sever was already known for some production work with 3rd Bass, and his contributions here put him into the running for most underrated Golden Era producer. More than any other cut I've listed here, "Radioactive" represents the perfect melding of innovative beats and rhymes, every element coming together to deliver a product that was truly ahead of its time. Sever hits the digital sampler hard, delivering a futuristic beat that sounds as toxic as the title implies, and at various points the steady bass line dips to near-subterranean levels. Money raps with scientific precision, using exact terms and dealing in complex concepts, bringing a sci-fi feel to the song that doesn't mine the bizarre vein forged by Ultramagnetic MC's, but instead points to Area 51/*X-Files* conspiracy vibes. I shouldn't need to tell you that this is incredibly successful, and the song really does feel like it was dropped in the wrong decade. It makes sense that something this volatile and unorthodox didn't succeed in the more simplistic commercial hip-hop era. It's about time someone else started digging on this and generating some proper interest in this lost classic of an album.

13. Bustin' Melonz—"1994" (1994)

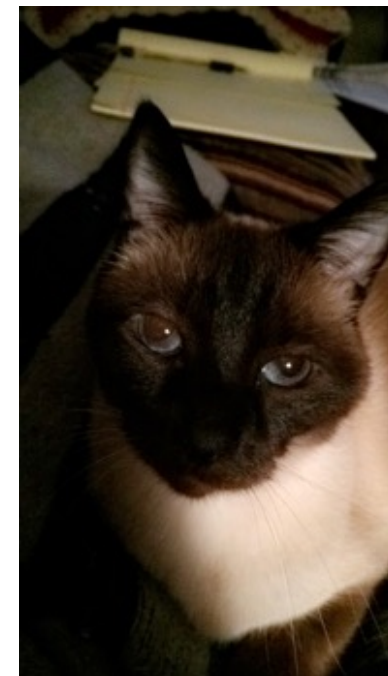
Wrapping it up, we have another group I can find pretty much no information about and who disappeared right after dropping one album, 1994's *Watch Ya Seeds Pop Out*. The only thing I can say for sure, and which should be obvious to most anyone hearing this track, is that they were listening to a good amount of Pete Rock & C.L. Smooth at the time. About half the songs on this album start off with introductory beats, before the actual cut comes in, mimicking one of Pete's stylistic affectations wholesale. The beat here, and elsewhere on the album, brings the expected hard drums and clean horns, with a pretty impressive use of stirring strings underneath everything. So yeah, it's completely imitative, but it's also a damn good copy of Rock's production. And the MCs don't even attempt to go near C.L.'s smooth, dexterously-dense rapping style, instead opting to trade verses in a manner much closer to hardcore hip-hop. The contrast in the hard-but-smooth beats and gruffer rapping works out pretty well, and it goes a long way to distinguishing the cut from just being another forgotten rip-off. Bonus points go to the group for their nearly indecipherable concept of "melons" and positive mentality as detailed in the liner notes. Don't ask me to explain.

this particular batch. I've been requesting a Captain Underpants feature for a while, and he went above and beyond to deliver. After reading this, I felt like diving back into the series myself, no joke. The Rally's review is a pretty damn great account of an event I was unfortunately absent from, but is detailed enough to put me right there on the South side.

What's still to come will hopefully bring some positive surprises and fresh breath into this project. We're gonna experiment some more, switch up the format and layouts, and I'm handing off the main feature reigns. Maybe that'll make me get the damn thing out sooner. Who knows. Until then, dive in and enjoy, and as always, feel free to reach out at albara_v1@denison.edu.

—Big Vin Vader

Rest in peace H. & B.



Food Mishaps: Reprise

by Research Anderson

Shouts to Evernote for getting this shit through the security walls at work.

Truth be told, I don't even know how the initial mishaps piece was received yet, but best believe I got a couple more for y'all. If you haven't read the initial piece in issue two, I'm sure you'll still get the gist of this one pretty quickly. I don't really have time to re-cap for free, just buy the damn zine.

Research Gets Sour

This one, I think, is the second most recent in the entire anthology. Not the grossest, but still a very ill advised food decision that I had to suffer for. So I work this lil standard ass 40 hour Monday-Friday first shift job that I absolutely love. The yaper is coming in steady, I have all night to watch wrestling, and all weekend to wild out. Come to think of it, I really gotta take some of this PTO I've been sitting on. Hit the pool, slam some hard seltzers, watch *Law & Order: SVU* all day. Anyway, maybe one of the most dangerous things about this job is the overly ambitious snack selection. The floor I work on has a vending machine, but all that's really ever in there is stale ass pastries and donuts and whatnot. They had some chewy lemonheads in there once but that shit sold like crack and was gone the next day (much to my dismay). The downstairs cafeteria, however, has all the candy I could ever want. The only problem with that is rather than the standard size, for whatever reason, all the candy downstairs comes in the big ass share bags. Not really an issue for someone with self-discipline, but we all know by now that ya boi don't know the meaning of that word when it comes to candy. You already know what's coming next. One fateful day, I put a whole bag (5 servings or so?) of sour Skittles in the air on my lunch break. I swear, it hurt to talk for 2 days. I ordered some Jimmy John's that night and could barely even eat it. I'm still not sure if my tongue was red from the Skittles or just bleeding, but I'm not ruling either out. It's worth noting as well that I've been diagnosed with TMJ (too much jaw), so all that chewing really fucked with that too. I haven't eaten a sour Skittle since and have found that sour gummy worms are way more forgiving when consumed in bulk.

Research Takes One for the County (Or At Least Delaware, Ohio)

This one deals with my estranged father to some extent, but we ain't gonna talk about that. Just know that if you're struggling with family issues of any kind, you're not alone and the squad is here for you. I'm here to uplift y'all and roast myself for your entertainment, so let's get to the vomit. This one takes us back to the 4th of July, sometime pre-2006 but I can't really date it much beyond that. It's Independence Day in Delaware, Ohio and shit is popping off. If you've never visited Delaware, it's the kind of town where holidays are really the only time anything exciting happens. I mean, shit, these kids get the day off school for an annual horse race. You get the picture, it really is a nice little city though, I got big love for the 740. At the time, I was spending every other weekend in Delaware with the other side of my family. On the day in question, they had gone to the store get some things for the city's firework celebration that evening. Naturally, as a growing young boy, I got hungry while they were gone and went prowling the cupboards for some snacks. I settled for a couple handfuls of Pringles, one from the barbeque can, and one from the ranch can. Time is passing (as it does), I'm watching *Fairly*

three verses, Biz details his rough time coming up in the industry, always the background guy, overlooked and forgotten, dissed to his face because nobody assumed he had the talent it takes. You can tell it was tough on him, and it makes the story of his success in the third verse all the more impactful; of any song at all, this is the one that will make you love and feel for Biz. It's just a shame that it's illegal and technically doesn't exist.

11. Brothers Uv Da Black Market—"Livin' In Da Bottle" (1992)

A big part of my draw to obscure rap albums and singles is bizarre cover art, and that was definitely the first thing that caught my eye with this group's only album, *Ruff Life*. It's a low-angle shot looking up at the group's two members on some sort of wooden platform, with a windowless brick wall and open blue sky. In reality, I'm sure that it's just some abandoned building or other urban setting, but it looks like a damn guillotine platform or something far stranger. Inside the album, there are a wealth of choice '92 East Coast non-hits and some surprisingly witty, nimble-tongued rapping touching on a whole wealth of topics. I could have chosen any of a half dozen standout cuts, the album is incredibly consistent, and pretty unique in its style. I went with "Livin' In Da Bottle" for its catchy piano line, insistent bounce, and uncommon lyrical subject. As you might guess, the whole thing is about the detriments of recreational alcohol indulgence turned dependence. There are plenty of tracks from this era that deal with the same topic (even E.L. Me touched on it on his album), but this one stands out for the MCs' witty approach, trading one liners and self-deprecating lines that are just on-point enough to make you question the guys' proximity to the subject. It isn't quite lighthearted, but it also is far from deathly serious, and is one of the best examples of the album's adventurous, playful lyricism, while also representing the solid, if of-its-time production. I can't hate on any song that includes the line "champagne bubbles got me seeing double, just like Noah's Ark." Another highly recommended platter through and through.



which is unsurprising given the quality of his album on a whole. The real stunner, unfortunately, is the fatal awareness and acceptance he brings to the song. Ending the first verse, just before we get the full “Genius” hook, Seagram tells us “I was born to get killed, I don’t give a fuck.” Hardly a shocking sentiment on a gangsta rap album, but all the more chilling since the man was gunned down in a drive-by years later, which remains unsolved. Seek out this album to honor his legacy the right way.

9. Alliance—“We Could Get Used to This” (1988)

Alliance were one of the less prominent lights of the always-great First Priority Records family. Then again, when your company includes Audio Two and MC Lyte, there really shouldn’t be any hard feelings over playing second fiddle. And I feel like Alliance get a solid amount of props from those in the know, since their similarly-titled album is solid A- material all around. On this track, the group settles into a JVC Force type groove, with hard drums, simple repeated melodic samples, and fairly typical brag raps delivered with more than admirable skill. The beat is built on a relatively early use of the drum break from Led Zeppelin’s “When the Levee Breaks,” which gives this track a rock-solid foundation; it really is impossible to fuck up a song featuring that sample. The other main components are a soulful, bouncing organ line, and a funky guitar line wheedling in and out of the verses. The two MC’s trade lines as you’d expect from an unheralded ’88 platter, and talk up the high life they’re living as rap stars. Nothing offensive, nothing life-changing, just a hard-ass, catchy beat with some solid MCs killing it overtop the music.

10. Biz Markie—“Alone Again” (1991)

Fuck Gilbert O’Sullivan. This song is very well known, just like Biz himself, but most people couldn’t tell you its name or why it’s so important. This is the track that led to the end of uncleared samples in hip-hop, which completely shook the industry for a loop. O’Sullivan objected to his somber tearjerker, about a lonely and forgotten man ultimately deciding to commit suicide, being used in such a crass manner by supposed joke rapper Markie. Had he taken his head out of his ass and listened to the song, he would have realized that Biz created a heartfelt, honest song detailing his years on the fringes of NY’s hip-hop culture, and his honest desire to be a success. Sure, it isn’t nearly as heavy or serious as Gil’s song, but people overlook the fact that Biz was capable of some incredibly powerful songs in his own right, and is far from the outright jokester everyone has assumed him to be. Check out “My Man Rich” and “Things Get a Little Easier” from his second album and you’ll see that Biz is a serious musician who wrote some highly underrated tracks of emotional hip-hop. “Alone Again” repurposes the Honeydrippers’ “Impeach the President” drum break and the bouncing piano lead from O’Sullivan’s song to create a somber bit of music for the MC’s life story. Over

OddParents, periodically going back to the cupboard for handfuls of Pringles. Before these goons got back the house, I had consumed two entire cans of Pringles without a second thought. We roll up to the function about 20 deep and everything is pretty smooth. I was the oldest kid at the time, so I was kind of just lamping in airplane mode. Outside ain’t really my thing, to be honest. Pretty uneventful overall, until I threw up both cans in two respective piles surrounding the blankets we had laid out to watch the fireworks. Whether each separate pile of vomit was uniformly comprised of one of the two flavors, I couldn’t tell you. Makes sense to me, though. Suffice to say, no one set up camp anywhere near us. One fool even walked through the puke in flip flops, the fam was rolling at that one. I like to think of myself as a true patriot for securing that VIP fireworks experience for everyone. Pringles still slap too.



RESTAURANT REVIEW: RALLY'S PARSONS AVENUE

by Peter Vilardi

Rally's Parsons Avenue
Restaurant type: Hell, fast food
Price range: \$ (Emotional toll: \$\$\$\$\$)
Location: Hell (1454 Parsons Avenue,
Columbus, OH 43207)

PART I: DÆMONS (or, Freedom Battle Spin Attack)

I used to think, or perhaps hope, that hell was not real. I'd hoped it was a myth, or simply an elaborate metaphor. Of course I've heard about hell; I was raised Catholic, and at a school named after St. Michael—the angel who literally kicked the devil out of heaven—you better believe I was "hella"

familiar with the concept. But our lessons about it were next to useless. Perhaps it was the very tangible post-9/11 paranoia still clouding the country, or our local diocese's slow descent into borderline secularity post-Vatican II (until like '09, when my grade school alma mater brought nuns in and shit got real weird). I am sure that our parents and teachers were trying, however feebly, to do right by us in those days. But the damage was done: in trying to shut out the hell of reality, they failed to convey the reality of hell.

I recall vividly one childhood class, maybe second or third grade, where the music teacher played us some instrumental track by Christian artist Michael W. Smith about the war between heaven and hell. (It might have been "Freedom Battle," but I'm really not sure. That dude has way, way too many cuts. It took me about 20 minutes of searching to hazard a guess at what song this might have been. That song doesn't sound like what I remember it might have sounded like. Anyway, it was not good, and neither is "Freedom Battle.") Our teacher said he had answered her call during his appearance guest-hosting on some Christian rock radio station; shouts out, I guess. Anyway, she planned a wavy activity for this very not wavy track. We not only had to dance and vibe out to the music, but also had to act it out and pretend to be angels kicking the devils' asses. I swear this is true. You best believe I was pulling out some of those spin-attack moves I cribbed from *Ocarina of Time*.

I realize this is all very odd and digressive (especially for me, now that I type it out), and that's the point. This sophomoric display of musical Catholicism, in all its faux-ritualistic glory, lost the trail entirely. I learned nothing of hell. This would prove to be a pattern in my dwindling Catholic education. Later, at St. Charles (an all-boys Catholic college preparatory high school, which is a restaurant review for another time), I took on Milton's overstuffed behemoth of a novel, *Paradise Lost*. It had some wild imagery, but its fanfiction.net-esque take on religious

get lost in the infectiousness of the track itself. I've yet to find another song like it, and its novelty never fades no matter how many times I've listened to it.

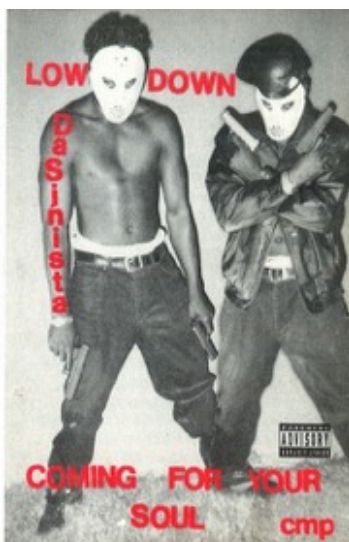
7. The Jaz feat. Jay-Z—"It's That Simple" (1991)

It's really a shame The Jaz's legacy will be little more than a footnote in Jay-Z's career, because he really did have the goods as an MC. Acting as Jay's mentor in the late '80s-early '90s and effectively putting him on (check out any of Jaz's videos from the era to see a rail-thin, baby-faced Jay and lose your shit laughing). Jaz's career as an MC was a weird, mixed bag, starting out as a would-be pop rapper with above-average lyrical skills on his 1989 debut, following the Africentric/Islam trend on his 1990 follow-up, and coming up somewhere in the middle on his final Golden Era EP, *Ya Don't Stop* from 1991. This cut appeared on the latter two releases and finds Jaz in his peak as a rhymer, overlooking his slightly gimmicky lightning speed proto-Das FX tongue-twister style. A simple, melodic organ line drives the song as Jaz and Jay trade bars and interact over four minutes of highly-skilled commercial hip-hop. You get a sense of Jay's talent at this early stage (as with any track he's featured on with Jaz), and also a good sense why the mentor himself was so highly regarded back in the day. Again, each of the three releases mentioned here are worth your time, with *Ya Don't Stop* standing as his discography's high point. I've never cared much for Jay-Z, and have no desire to compare the two rappers' on their disparate achievements, but I feel this cut in particular is a good entry point for anyone interested in the joys to be found in obscure rap music.

8. Seagram—"I Don't Give a Fuck" (1992)

I'm an absolute sucker for "Genius of Love" samples; it's hands-down one of the greatest songs of all time, and I could make a case that it found its best use in the hands of the various hip-hop producers who sampled it over the years. Granted, "Genius of Love" is an upbeat, catchy as hell song, and most tracks that sample it approximate that same positive vibe; Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde's "Genius Rap" is just old school party rhymes over the looped track. Oakland rapper and Rap-A-Lot Records roster member Seagram took a completely different approach with this cut from his debut album, *The Dark Roads*. The majority of the track is stripped down so much that you can't even pick the Tom Tom Club out of the mix. The drum track remains the same on the verses, but the only other music is vague guitar notes that are hard to recognize. Following each verse's declaration of the song title, that familiar hook sets in and propels the song. Seagram's lyrics primarily focus upon his skills on the mic, as well as his reputation in the streets and assorted threats and boasts. Even where he fails to change the game in terms of content, he has a surprising amount of dexterity and spits his verses with a laid back, wit-heavy barrage of jabs. Everything about the song hits the right notes,

LOW DOWN DA SINISTA
COMING FOR YOUR SOUL



local rapper who never made it beyond his hometown scene, but would have done it all the same anyway. For Christ's sake, the cover of this tape is two dudes wearing hockey masks and holding glocks in each hand. Incredible. The track sounds exactly like you'd expect, a wailing synth rolling all over the place, clicking drum machine rhythms and burbling bass lines. Not that there's anything wrong with that type of track, particularly of an original vintage like this example is. But what really sets Low Down apart is the balls-out insanity he brings to this track, going fully Satanic, not just threatening to smoke his foes, but to literally take their goddamn souls. He's paranoid, on the verge of a breakdown, and still your worst nightmare, and he wants you to know

that. The hook is literally "Coming for your soul, ho, hand it over quickly/Or watch this 9mm glock light that ass up like a Christmas tree." And if you aren't sold yet, another track on the tape is just called "Blah," and features Low Down rapping with that word alone. A true unheralded pioneer.

6. P-King—"Nasty & Naughty" (1992)

I know absolutely nothing about P-King beyond the fact that he released his album *It's Fundamental* on Warlock in 1992 and has a few stray discogs credits under his real name. That album is pretty good, and unlike a lot of the proto-roughneck hardcore albums coming out of NYC at the time. The beats and rap styles are all over the place, from sample-heavy Golden Era styled tracks, to full-on dancehall experiments. And then there are the tracks like this, the lead-off cut from the album which blends a fairly standard hip-hop backing track with doo wop vocal harmonies and jangly fifties pop guitar lines. Sure, there was that brief period in the earlier '90s where groups like Rappin' is Fundamental dipped into doo wop tracks as a form of forward progression, but P-King the only artist I've heard pull it off and get it completely right. The vocals, as you might have guessed, are just classic brag raps concerning King's sexual prowess, although everything is less crude than you would expect. The lyrics are all fine and good, but really the backing track itself is just such a perfect blend of soaring vocal harmonies and every melodic excess of uptempo '50s pop music that you can't help but

concepts, like Dante's *Inferno*, is often conflated with what hell is supposed to be. Hell is not like these works say it is. Not at all.

Hell is a real place. Its suffering is not fantastical and literary, but concrete and visceral. It is the bastion of eternal torment, the sound of flesh ripping from bones, the crackle of flame devouring all it touches in a smoking, hissing rage. It is the cry of a motherless child screeching through the light reflecting off a thousand blades of death, caked in blood, soaked in despair. What is more, it is a tangible, corporeal location that can be accessed on Earth. It is the building

looming directly atop the unholy portal that seals away hell and protects our world. God is not real. Hell is.

The portal to hell is located at 1454 Parsons Avenue, Columbus, OH 43207. Atop it is a Rally's Hamburgers restaurant.

We were there.



PART II: FLESH (or, Hamburgers, Since 1985)

I've worked many terrible minimum-wage jobs in my lifetime. These retail and food service jobs have a way of revealing unpleasant truths in the universe, most specifically the cruelty, idiocy and selfishness of humankind. But they are not hell, you see. A movie theater during a midnight premiere is surely a terrible place to work, as is a retail store on Black Friday. I have had many terrible experiences I wish to forget at jobs like this, but with time my annoyance and misery has subsided. Hellish they are, but they are not hell.

The Rally's Hamburgers on Parsons Avenue, however, is as close to hell as possible. It looks nothing like the image of suffering I had been conditioned to fear and reject. Any fire is confined to grills and fryers, and the wails of the damned are replaced by the honking squawk of impatient drive-thru customers. But, make no mistake, this is surely the furthest from any divine presence one can travel within this mortal plane. For this is a job located directly above hell, its employees doomed to walk in its path of hate in order to survive. This Rally's has become their hell. We who do not work there are deeply, profoundly lucky that this is not a hell that belongs to us. But, in eating there, hell has become a part of us.

Research, TTUM & I ventured cautiously into hell one evening; we needed a pre-concert meal, and it looked like a Rally's. We noted with amusement that the sign outside appeared to have been unchanged since the founding of Rally's itself (1985). Evil does not need to be redesigned or repackaged by existing corporate structures; the cruelest acts of evil exist outside of time and space as we know it. We contemplated the drive-thru, but with three of us ordering, we

opted to take our chances at the walk-in. Like so many, we were fooled by appearances, and played ourselves right into the hands of Lucifer.

PART III: WASTE (or, Pass-Thru the Unholy Realm)

Upon our entry, we were met with our first sobering visions of the Rally's from hell. A glass window (bulletproof, according to a sticker on it) with a small pass-thru drawer was all that separated us from the fabled domain of evil. Behind it, six employees—all with the same haggard look in their eyes, all dressed in bedraggled Rally's uniforms—ran the kitchen, preparing Big Bufords and bites boxes in full view. Above them, a large intercom blared the audio from the drive-thru terminal, the derisive snorts of an impatient customer echoing across the grubby kitchen. ("Would you like to try a #1 combo?" "No, I would not!") We glanced at one another nervously, but retained some optimism; perhaps the finer points of the updated Rally's menu would make our doomed voyage worth it.

I was up first, and decided on some value-menu items; surely spending more than \$5 in a place like this could only lead to more pain. I asked the woman behind the window, who had been staring at us mistrustfully since our entrance into the refuge of lost souls, for a spicy chicken sandwich and a fry lover burger. She asked me to speak up, and it took several repetitions of my order until neither she nor I was entirely sure what I wanted. All I wanted was to leave, but of course that was not an option. Hell is not so gracious. Taking a chance, I asked for a chicken bites box as well. We were out of chicken bites, I was told, but strips could be substituted. Yes, yes, fine. I sent my credit card through the pass-thru drawer, silently praying it would not slip and fall into the void located directly beneath our feet.

Research was more optimistic than I, and inquired about milkshake options. The employees looked at one another for a moment. The clerk said "The machine is broken." As one, all six employees laughed—loudly and cruelly, like the coyotes in *The Lion King*, I realized, stoned—and fell silent just as quickly. On one hand, this was deeply surreal and really quite uncomfortable; on the other, they were right. Milkshakes? At Rally's? On Parsons Avenue? Our optimism must have been poison to them. Thinking quickly, Research ordered a #1 combo, paid, and backed away. This was an incredibly wise move—the woman visibly brightened and it was ready to go very quickly—but I didn't yet realize its significance. I felt confused. This was not a Rally's I understood, nor a place that could be real.

TTUM ordered nothing. On reflection, hers was the wisest move of all. For playing the devil's games results in exactly what he wants; like the computer said in *War Games*, the only winning move is not to play. Wouldn't you prefer a #1 combo?

We left, shaken by our experience, unsure we'd even gotten what we'd ordered. The chicken strips, two stone-shaped poultry tablets that formed a mocking rejection of the ten commandments, were unaccompanied by fries. I didn't bother to return; those who choose to tiptoe close to hell without falling in should be thankful to leave such a place, even if the fries they ordered do not. The sandwiches were fine. They were not made with love, nor with craft. They were made by people who work directly above hell. I can sympathize. But I can't recommend it, and I can't go back.

the verses are all hard drums, low-rumble bassline, and distant horn stabs. The MCs trade bars a little more fluidly this time around, with each taking a few bars before switching off and letting the chorus take over. The mode here is definitely hardcore, roughneck don't-fuck-with-us, and one guy even refers to himself as "a brother with the mind of Caligula," which has gotta be a first in a rap track. Personally, the album version is my preferred just for the little production effects, but I'd say the rapping here is stronger if you don't mind shouted gang vocals. Of every group/artist represented here, I'd say Troubleneck are the most fascinating. It looks like they released three singles, including this, as well as a limited-run demo tape, but have a whole host of tracks from the era that have come out in semi-legit form on CD and vinyl. Pretty much all of the twenty-some tracks I have are great, rough and tough early-'90s NYC hardcore rap that should have found a better standing even among more casual fans.

4. Milk D. feat. Adrock—"SPAM" (1994)

This is one of the least obscure cuts listed here, featuring as it does a Beastie Boy and the voice of Golden Era legends Audio Two. Hell, Milk's *Never Dated* EP even saw major release on Def Jam and had a video or two for other singles. Somewhere along the way it fell off the radar though, and is begging to be rediscovered. You should recognize Adrock as the beastie with the needlepoint-sharp nasal voice, and if you've heard "Top Billin'" (shame on you if not...) then you know that Milk's voice approximates broken glass scratching a chalkboard. Thus we get perhaps the single most conceptually brilliant rap song of all time: pair two of the most irritating, high-pitched MCs of all time on a track designed to simply annoy. But look a little deeper than the shrill-beyond-belief vocals, and you realize that the track itself has a hell of a lot going for it too. All we have for a beat is some hard-as-concrete live drums and a distant, drifting flute note repeated throughout. It's simplicity itself, and a perfect example of hip-hop minimalism put to excellent effect. As a fellow funny-voiced man, I can certainly appreciate what Milk and Adrock are laying down here, and it doesn't hurt that they're both veterans who know exactly what to do on a track. They trade bars, poking fun at their voices, shouting out various pop culture figures, and of course making plays at your girl. Just three-and-a-half minutes of perfect low-key shit-talking, shutting down all the haters who can't hang with their voices. Hell, they don't even have the stamina to make it past the second verse. Bonus points for the single release of this cut having a severed pig's head on white background as its cover art.

5. Low Down Da Sinista—"Comin' for Your Soul" (1996)

This one comes from one of those impossibly rare (at least physically) mid-'90s Memphis rap tapes. You know the exact sort, the ones where the lyrics straddle the perfect line between gangsta rap and out-and-out horrorcore, and featuring the sort of low-fi, synthed out basement beats still being mined for effect by revivalist-minded MCs today. But this is the real artifact, a grimy, honest-to-god regional release by a

2. E.L. Me & the Street Products—"I've Been Down Too Long" (1992)

My number two pick follows up the Headz pretty closely, and rides a similarly mellow beat to great effect. This obscure California group—ostensibly just lead MC E.L. Me and some features on scattered tracks—put out one album in 1992's *16 Lessons from the Street* (which has fourteen tracks), as well as this single and its accompanying video. This is definitely riding after Ice Cube's solo albums in its vibes of educated thug posturing, and the rest of the album shows a similar lyrical slant, while maintaining an uncommon level of quality control. Me raps here about the tough times he's faced and constructs a solid story rap out of his desire to rise up through the ranks and escape the life he was born into. Nothing groundbreaking, sure, but he imparts an honest sense of desperation, as well as some surprising sentimentality about the difficulties of adulthood, particularly given the disadvantages inherent to his social status. Over a melodic bassline and the familiar sleigh bell sample from Average White Band's "Schoolboy Crush," Me recounts his teenage years coming up and his shift to crime to achieve the life he desired. Naturally, not everything about his course is positive or to be encouraged, but the story is compelling and feels real even where it surely can't be. The final verse is the best of all, with Me detailing the precarious nature of wealth, the volatility of the environment he still existed within. Even when you've come up, there's nothing that can stop someone from taking that away from you at the next turn. His rap is down to earth, likable for its honesty and the MC's genuine desire to improve his situation and find a better place in the world. A really heartbreaking song when you think about it, and with more than enough going for it to overlook a few clumsy lyrics.

3. Troubleneck Brothers—"Troubleneck Wreck" 12" & remix (1992)

The two versions of this track are completely different in every way: music, lyrics, vibe and intended function. They really aren't even the same song when you get right down to it. This NY crew ran seven-deep, so I couldn't even begin to distinguish one voice from another in appraising the track. Hell, even when it's the same MC between the two versions, his style is completely switched up. Starting with the album version, probably the stronger of the two, we get a hard-thumping drum track and driving, descending piano riff. The production is way stronger here, particularly in the weird little touches going on between each verse. Following the shouted chorus, for the first four bars of each new rapper's verse, there's a unique sound layering. So one guy gets blasting horns, another bleating sirens, and so on, helping distinguish each section even when the rappers' names escape mention. The whole song is more uptempo in this case, and the MCs boast, brag, and give us a little sense of who they are in their verses. Again, everyone is more than competent on the mic, which admittedly doesn't help them stand out from one another.

The 12" version is way more in a post-Onyx '93 hardcore hip-hop mold, but that suits me just fine. The beat is underlaid on the intro and chorus with a squealing siren, and

EPILOGUE: PÆAN (or, Would You Like to Try a #1 Combo?)

I have been to other Rally's restaurants, even a time or two since the experience. Although the experience is often disappointing, it is decidedly less hellish and more purgatorial. The Rally's on Hudson Avenue in Old North Columbus, for instance, is a far better bet; you will likely leave alive, and with the food you ordered. The milkshake machine is rarely ever broken, and the more esoteric menu items are almost always available. But my behavior at Rally's restaurants has changed forever. For I have been to Hell. I have seen the face of God melt away, laughing at me, disappearing into a cloud of ash. I have gazed upon the faces of the employees of that Rally's on Parsons Avenue. I have seen their deep sadness, unable to save themselves from the edge of existence. And I have heard them ask me, time and time again, their voices a broken monotone, "Would you like to try a #1 combo?"

Rally's management has apparently asked its employees at all locations to upsell the Big Buford Combo. I've been to several Rally's restaurants in several different states (never a Checkers, though, for some reason), and each time I am greeted with "Would you like to try a #1 combo?" Ever since visiting hell, I have realized that it is not the combo that matters, but the act of asking. "Would you like to try a #1 combo?" is the cry of the damned, a plea for empathy and understanding in the face of suffering.

You see, Rally's, with all its value-menu options, renders the act of paying for a #1 combo nearly unthinkable. Spending \$8 on a single combo meal feels excessive when you can get so much among the \$1, \$2, & \$3 fare. Obviously the franchise makes more money off Big Bufords, attempting to centralize them in their advertisements. Curiously, at most Rally's locations I've visited, I've not seen anyone order the Big Buford. In fact, not since Research's fateful order at Parsons Avenue had I seen one person order a #1 combo. All I saw was Rally's star sandwich getting eaten alive by the value menu.

With all that in mind, imagine working a double weekend shift at any Rally's, let alone the one located directly over the portal to the kingdom of Beelzebub, and all night long being forced to recommend an expensive sandwich combo, every day being refused, sometimes even verbally rebuked for asking, time and time again. Even at the non-hell Rally's locations it's got to be a bit dispiriting. I recall a visit to the Hudson Avenue restaurant one night. I can still hear the flat affect of the drive-thru employee asking me through the intercom. His was a voice without hope, asking a question to which he already knows the answer: "No, I would not!"

Being set in my ways, I was craving my usual value-menu fare. But I remembered. I remembered those who were trapped. I remembered the supernatural heat emanating from the kitchen, and the strained faces of the employees. I remembered the keening cruelty of the customers screeching out of the intercom, echoing throughout a crucible of smoke and burning oil. I remembered Research ordering a #1 combo, and the woman behind the counter brightening just a little bit, even amidst the inferno and confusion. In that moment, time bent, and the bleak underbelly of hell cracked open for a millisecond, revealing a brief flash of light, before sealing once again. I was far away, at another Rally's location, but I felt it. Damn.

"Yes," I said, "I would."

**Somebody Else Give
This Shit A Title**

by Research Anderson

Between the love we've been getting for MC Freeman's young adult series pieces and my 7 inch grab bag review, I had to put this one in the air. In what may be my most on brand contribution yet to this zine, I've decided to delve briefly into an art form very dear to me: teen cyber/stalker dramas. Ask anyone knows me irl, my affinity for these movies is not in the least bit ironic or insincere. I remember in the days before DVR, I was playing in a metalcore band that practiced in my parent's basement and I would kick everyone out in time to watch the week's new episode of *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*. I've been pondering a 7 part essay series on *Pretty Little Liars* as well, but have come to the conclusion that that may just have to be a completely separate publication I have to undertake. In any case, here's some words about the most 5 recent movies I've watched in this realm.

Friend Request (2016)

A popular college student's love of social media becomes her biggest regret when a mysterious account marks each of her friends for a grisly demise.

I heard there was some widespread critical disdain for this one, but lucky for y'all, Research Maltin is here to set the record straight. This film is a masterpiece, plain and simple. The best



1. The Nappy Headz—"I'm Nappy"—1994

This is hands-down the top pick in this self-created category, and one of my all-time top hip-hop tracks regardless of style, era or prominence. This Danville, Iowa crew released this one single on Polydor, with four versions and edits of this track, as well as an incredible music video, and disappeared. If it wasn't for that video, I wouldn't have come across this hot-buttered track of prime early-'90s greatness. The video caught my eye for a number of reasons: the group standing and rapping the track's chorus in a goddamn corn field first of all, not to mention later shots of them laying around on train tracks and posing around various boarded up and burned down spots around town. It's the most Midwestern shit I've ever seen in a rap video, and you can't convince me that it isn't the realest, most charming thing imaginable.

Now the track itself is every bit as good as the video would lead you to believe. I remember a comment on the Youtube page that said something about how every group in 1993-94 had to have a dude from the Islands, a smooth-voiced chubby guy, and a bald-headed roughneck. That's this track in a nut shell, but there's so much more going on here. The beat is built around a guitar loop from Bobby Caldwell's "Down for the Third Time," which gives it an easygoing, blue-eyed soul foundation for the three rappers to spit their tales of getting high, laid, and just chilling out. The beat is so simple, but perfect and unobtrusive, and the three MCs are more than capable of carrying the track. There's nothing too special going on here lyrically, but you have to admire the weird insularity they create with their constructed slang and concept of being "nappy." Some things don't require more thought, they just exist as they should



be. I would love some more Nappy Headz tracks to be unearthed, but I don't see that happening, so I'll sit here with my 12" single and cassette copies of this track and its various versions and enjoy the perfection contained within. Essential.

A Baker's Dozen Neglected Hip-Hop Gems

by Big Vin Vader

There was a two-year period in college where I was listening to nothing but old hip-hop, as well as the accompanying *Breaks and Beats* compilations that provided the genre's most foundational samples. It was a great time to revisit some old favorites in more detail, while the overall obsessiveness of my habit also led me to some new masterpieces. The thing about my listening practices is you can only spend so much time with the all-time canonical classics of the genre before you want something more, something a little harder to find and get into. That led to the more obscure artists who were on at one point in time, but fell out of vogue or never produced any major hits. People like King Tee, Masta Ace, Lords of the Underground and Godfather Don are no less deserving of praise, and if you look hard enough, you'll not only find rappers who are still going at it today, but who made significant, albeit quieter impacts on the music as a whole. That surface scratched, I allowed myself to dig around in the realm of complete hip-hop anonymity and embraced the artist that never stood a chance or just got lost in the shuffle of the early-90s rap rush. These are the artists and groups who never caught a break because they didn't have a radio single, were too hardcore, or were on local indie labels and just never had a shot at the larger scene. Falling into this category are people who were legit living the lifestyles they rapped about, were just local talents pursuing their dreams, or were tragically killed before they had the chance to make good on their talent and ambition. For whatever reason, some released only a few singles, or even less, while others put out an album or two before disappearing.

I'm not here to argue that any of these artists produced full-length works as consistently good or innovative as the established classics. In fact, most are visible imitators running with the ball established by genre pioneers and attempting to cash in on the train to reap their own rewards. Some albums are full of throwaway dud tracks that have the most derivative beats anyone has ever conceived; often these repeat across collections ad nauseam. There are occasionally verses/ideals/concepts so offensive, and so poorly handled that they can flat-out wreck your headphones and listening device for the rest of the day, and from time to time, otherwise adept rappers drop the ball hard in their clumsy, poorly-written verses, proving that talent with a notepad is just as crucial as skills on the mic. At its best, however, this forgotten-tier of hip-hop obscurity has produced artists with two or three legitimate forgotten masterpieces to their names. Listening to some of these albums, I was struck by just how impressive and goddamn incredible single stand-out tracks were. They've since remained among my favorite cuts of all time, demonstrating the rewards to be found while plumbing the depths of American golden era hip-hop music. This list could have numbered up to thirty or more easily, but presented here are the absolute sure shots from my years as a white hip-hop head.

way I can think of to describe this young adult cyber thriller without spoiling too much is like a lovechild of the *Final Destination* series and that Facebook episode of *South Park*. I mean, shit, what more could you ask for? I was genuinely shook the first time I watched this movie alone in the dark and had to close my eyes/look away for several parts. There was a lot more cult shit and witchcraft than I expected, and all the internet usage I could have hoped for (I'm a sucker for movies/shows where the characters' online/phone messages pop up on the screen. Y'all seen *Unfriended*?). I'm very upset I missed the theatrical release of this scorcher, but rumor has it a sequel has been green-lit. Best believe I will not make the same mistake twice.

Indiscretion (2016)

After a weekend fling with artist Victor, Veronica, a psychiatrist and politician's wife, becomes the target of Victor's dangerous romantic obsession.

This one is an actual Lifetime movie, so you already know the pedigree that has come to be expected from the brand. Rest assured, this movie lives up to the hype and then some. This one is a little less of a slow boil than some of its counterparts and dives pretty quickly into the hardcore stalking. I ain't mad at it, though, the pacing is still flawless. I don't know what kind of time capsule world Lifetime movies are supposed to take place in, but I definitely did not realize this movie was only made two years ago. Also worth noting that this is by far one of the most violent Lifetime movies I've ever seen. I feel like there was some kind of happy ending to this one, but I honestly couldn't tell you what it is. Overall, this shit is extremely bleak. Finding this name brand Lifetime original on Netflix was a rare treat, and I urge y'all to peep before it's too late.

Bad Match (2017)

A player who uses the internet to facilitate his womanizing ways is tormented when he spurns a persistent woman who won't take no for an answer.

This is the first and only Tinder-centered mover that I'm aware of, so trust and believe this shit goes crazy. You may think you could predict this entire movie, but you'd be dead wrong. The twist at the end of this one is on some *Breaking Bad* shit. The whole thing is wild cinematic throughout, though. I was particularly impressed at how much emphasis is placed on the intricate details of dating apps in this movie. There's some underlying social commentary here about online dating and the consequences of treating people as disposable romantic partners, but who's really trying to hear that? I felt that part was executed a bit poorly anyway. I'm still not really sure who the villain is in the movie and who I should be siding with from a moral standpoint. Maybe, that was the point all along, though.

You Get Me (2017)

After a one-night stand, Holly develops a dangerous obsession with Tyler and transfers to his high school, desperate to keep their "romance" alive.

Alright, I know this one sounds exactly like almost every other one on the list, but stick with me a little while longer here. *You Get Me* is a film you do not want to sleep on. This one is over the top in the best way possible and makes a strong case for Netflix as the inevitable successor to the Lifetime empire. It also stars Bella Thorne, who I understand to be a relatively well-known

actress, although admittedly, this was my first and only exposure to her. I'm struggling to put into words the emotional journey this movie took me on. Unlike *Indiscretion*, the sinister events of *You Get Me* unfold at a meticulous and looming pace. I can safely say here that the dread conveyed throughout this movie is some of the best I've ever seen. I haven't made it around to re-watching this one yet, so if y'all wanna come through and experience this masterpiece with the god, please be my guest. I got some gin.

Trust (2011)

When Annie, a 14 year old girl, is seduced by a 41-year-old internet predator known she knows only as "Charlie", it tears apart her family.

This one is just fucking creepy, and it doesn't help that it was directed by David Schwimmer. To be honest, I wasn't really a fan of this one. As a dedicated scholar of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, this is nothing I haven't seen done better hundreds of times by the best show on television. Despite all the gross shit that happens in this movie, I was particularly disturbed at the scene of Annie and "Charlie" eating ice cream together at the mall. These motherfuckers were eating ice cream out of a waffle cone with a damn spoon! This could only be the behavior of a vicious predator. It's worth noting that the landscape of this genre of movies was still in its relative infancy when this movie came out, and obviously, David Schwimmer was not going to be the one to deliver the magnum opus to redefine the style. I don't even think this one is on Netflix anymore.



Why didn't they give them the growth juice with the zombie juice? Critics often ask questions like these to pick apart at bad plots, but the more I think about it, the more I see Pilkey's intention and the brilliance behind his execution of the story. The plot is pure surrealism, a free-form excuse to give Captain Underpants some superpowers in the most roundabout and visually ridiculous way possible. Hell, look at the title! What's more, there are far fewer scatological jokes and puns than you'd think, and the majority of the humor is also driven by surrealism. This installment feels removed from the rest of the series because of this, but that's not a bad thing; in fact, it crystallizes what makes the characters, story and series great while simultaneously subverting our expectations. There are convoluted, esoteric and ridiculous *Captain Underpants* novels, but none as madcap, daring and ingenious as this. It's all that and a swig of Super Power Juice.

Final Thoughts

If there's any larger patterns or insights I've gleaned from reading all this young-adult literature, it's that many a book series stays consistent and wavy for like 5 or 6 novels before diving completely off the deep end. Dav Pilkey's *Captain Underpants* saga, as fantastic as it can be, definitely jumps the shark with the time-travel gambit and repeating villains. But the first half of the series is one of the finest children's book experiences possible; Pilkey is recklessly inventive, unafraid to get very foolish with it, and probably off hella L's laughing his ass off at his own poop jokes. Rather than simply going for cheap jokes, he weaves them effortlessly into well-rounded storytelling. These books are deep wells, and upon rereading these plot summaries (shouts out Wikipedia) I was surprised by how many small details and in-jokes I remembered. It's

one thing to make readers laugh with cheap gags and scatological material, but quite another to use them with craftsmanship and panache. By making the story and the jokes one and the same, Pilkey has created some true classics, and continues to flex on kids and adults to this day. In solidarity with my boi Dav Pilkey, I dedicate this next L to Captain Underpants and the power of Underpantyworld. And that's it for this power ranking; I got some even more wavy ones cooking right now. Hope you Lemony Snicket stans weren't too disappointed (you often are, I would imagine). L time, peace y'all.



Ring recall ad, saying that they cause women to do the opposite of their commands under hypnosis. Of course, you already know those boys said "Don't turn into Wedgie Woman, far and away the best villain in the entire GD series." What's worse, the last of their Super Power Juice spills into hair, giving her weird tentacle hair with hands on it, on some real Doc Ock type shit. She even thinks to build robot copies of George and Harold, which shoot spray starch at Captain Underpants and neuter his powers. Only some clever exploitation of "the placenta effect," a store called Everything Except Fabric Softener (at which the bois buy a lot of hair remover), and a hastily drawn Captain Underpants origin comic can set things right. By this point in the series, Pilkey is in full swing, topping himself left and right; that dude must've chugged hella Super Power Juice when he was writing this. The narrative is lean and taut, but there's always time for great gags. It's refreshing to see Pilkey integrating legitimate darkness back into the series in a more tonally consistent way. Wedgie Woman is a real threat, going so far as to kidnap the boys and leave them in her house with a falling-ax trap. But she's also called Wedgie Woman, and her hair has hands, so the whole thing feels dramatic and silly without being overbearing. Also, even though it's a takeoff on Superman's classic origin story, that Captain Underpants origin comic is dense with jokes, and might even steal the show. Big Daddy Long Johns? The Starch Ship Enterprize? His adoptive parents naming him "Captain" after their favorite cereal? Fuck outta here.

1. Invasion of the Incredibly Naughty Cafeteria Ladies from Outer Space (and the Subsequent Assault of the Equally Evil Lunchroom Zombie Nerds) (#3)

Oh yeah. This is the one you want. George and Harold learn the old vinegar-volcano trick in science class, and trick the cafeteria ladies into replicating it on a large scale. After they quit, three aliens named Zorx, Klax, and Jennifer pose as cafeteria ladies to gain access to the school, and use weird juices to turn everyone into zombie nerds. Luckily, they steal the aliens' growth juice, intended to create a giant zombie nerd army; unluckily, they dispose of it improperly, creating a giant dandelion called the Dandelion of Doom. In classic style, the boys trick the aliens by switching labels, causing the aliens to pour Self-Destruct Juice into the engine of their ship. They also give Captain Underpants Super Power Juice to save him from the dandelion, which is really the turning point of the entire series. Before, Captain Underpants was a mere man masquerading as a superhero; now he is a titan, a god among men. I think this book is the best because it strikes a perfect balance between the minimalist plots and ideas of early books and the heady, convoluted material of the latter half of the series. For instance, it's great to see Pilkey use the existence of aliens to surprisingly mundane effect; where sequels mine the ever-loving crap out of the series' other, more scatological villains, the aliens are just weird and silly and seem to carry around a lot of juice. And their actions cannot be rationalized, making their extremely shoestring plot to conquer the world seem even more arcane under scrutiny. Why not just pour the zombie juice into the water supply literally anywhere? Why start in Piqua, OH, at an elementary school? Why does everyone become zombie nerds and not just zombies?

First Transmission, from the Ground-up

by Big Vin Vader

So, the other day I finally got down to watching my copy of Psychic TV's *First Transmission* tape, all four hours in one go. I knew I was in for a hell of a ride, as this isn't some long-form video for Psychic TV, but a four-part series of rituals, propaganda, noxious home video footage, and image manipulation from the group's chaos magic-practicing wing, Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth. I can't begin to get into the occult and symbolic functions of this stuff, whether it's too dense and didactic for a non-inductee, or because the sheer visceral batshit quality of everything is too much to process. I'm positive there was an intended function for every onscreen transgression, and anyone more familiar with the group will take away a very different meaning from the tape. For my purposes, its impenetrability and the shocking acts committed within, were a large part the tape's appeal. What meaning I did take away was speculation, and came only as I waded deeper into the video.

You can look *First Transmission* up online, find VHS rips on YouTube even, but you still won't find much real information. The establishing quality is that the tape was originally offered to fans of Psychic TV with proofs-of-purchase from their earliest LPs, real underground shit. Since then, 1982 exactly, the physical tapes have essentially disappeared, replaced with hushed mentions of their contents, removed wholly from the intended context of the project. Ritual mutilation, genital violence, true snuff footage, shameless violent propaganda. Snippets were taken and repurposed for underground video mixtapes, and stills found their ways into various hands even as the tape itself remained a mystery.

Many of these things are on the tape, and there are plenty of others, some mundane and others more startling than any shockumentary highlight reel. All of it is pervaded with an insistent vibe of mysticism and propaganda, a feeling that the conviction of the participants is not the sort of fervor you'd like to encounter. I'm still not sure of everything I saw, and I doubt the following words will convince anyone else that this tape is worth pursuing. But there is nothing else like it, and I can't deny being drawn to the sort of unease this thing provoked in me.



Part I: Ritual ov Psychick Youth

I had to admire the Psychic TV update on the retro '50s out-of-service TV tracking screen, replacing the Indian head format with skulls. Less welcome was the sudden audio takeover of a crying child and visual shift to a TOPY spokesman decked out like a Televangelist. Already the propagandistic nature of the whole project was making itself clear. The audio on the tape is mostly out-of-sync, and the video technique is rudimentary at best, to say nothing of the washed-out, subterranean image quality. Truly the sickliest use of fluorescent greens and yellows, the shade of vomit onscreen for the entire runtime. And of course, with the recurring themes and images of brainwashing, repurposed and perverted religious practices, and ritualistic repetition there's no question the aesthetic was intentionally forged for maximum discomfort.

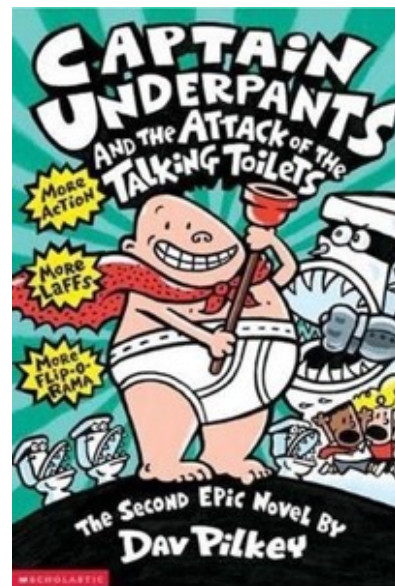
I couldn't make out a damn word the spokesman uttered, but that didn't make his introduction seem any less necessary. The calm tones of Psychic TV's background music fade out and the image cuts to black before switching over to some grimy cellar. The temple for the Ritual ov Psychick Youth. The next hour is given over to the titular practice, the events



variously claustrophobic, grotesque, and celebratory. I had no fucking clue what was happening as I watched it, and admit even now to not knowing much more. We get a succession of imagery, too blatant and direct—as everything on the tape is—to be called suggestive: phalluses, washed-out crucifixions, bound male bodies and dirty blades. Underneath it all is an ambient track to lull you in, the tranquility at least initially matching the composition of the devotees themselves.

It's hard not to think of *Videodrome's* televised torture scenes while watching the ritual, and Cronenberg's film came about around the same time First Transmission was unleashed on TOPY fans. You have to wonder about the cross-pollination, or at least the compatibility of creative minds to envision such specific violent actions in similar modes. But TOPY's broadcasts are the real deal, no snuff scenes, but plenty of rent flesh and modified bodies, all performed upon willing subjects with some obscure purpose in mind.

3. Attack of the Talking Toilets (#2)



The second installment in the series improves upon the OG in every possible sense. Pilkey has settled on making the *Captain Underpants* universe as ridiculous and convoluted as George and Harold's comics, and the tone of the series lightens considerably. For instance, in the first novel, Jerome Horwitz Elementary School was a more existentially and literally oppressive place; here it is still awful, but more hilariously so. Pilkey further lightens the tone by expanding his cast, giving more comic spotlights and punny names to George and Harold's weird classmates and teachers. (Miss Ribble? Miss Anthrope? Morty Fyde? Sick.) He also introduces us to Melvin Sneedly, a classic egghead bootlicker trope. This little rat fink strikes a deal with the bois—he won't snitch on their pranks to sabotage the Invention Convention if they don't fuck with his invention—and then runs straight to Mr. Krupp like a fuckin' narc. Anyway, of course these bois

end up messing around with Melvin's machine, the PATSY 2000, which is, for all intents and purposes, a 3D printer. They use it to make photocopies of their comic book, which results in IRL toilet zombies and a giant one called the Turbo Toilet 2000. When Captain Underpants is eaten and all is lost, George and Harold use the machine to make a giant robot, the Incredible Robo-Plunger, which easily kicks the toilets' asses(?). This novel feels like a stronger debut for the series as a whole, and is more indicative of the scope and breadth of the *Underpants* expanded universe. Plus, you can't get a lot grosser than George and Harold's brilliant gambit to save the teachers: use underwear to shoot chipped beef into the toilets' mouths to make them puke. I don't recall for sure, but I think it's safe to assume that the underwear is the underwear Captain Underpants is wearing. Man, two books in and we're two for two on weird implied adult nudity. Plus his junk prolly touched that chipped beef. Sorry, y'all. But am I wrong?

2. Wrath of the Wicked Wedgie Woman (#5)

I've had evil teachers for sure—I'm really glad that my 7th grade math teacher was last seen working at a Buffalo Wild Wings, tbh—but none so evil as Ms. Ribble. After George and Harold ruin her retirement by faking a marriage proposal from Mr. Krupp (leading to a whole wedding getting called off in real time), she makes them repeat the fourth grade. Interestingly, after they hypnotize her, a nearby television plays a 3-D Hypno

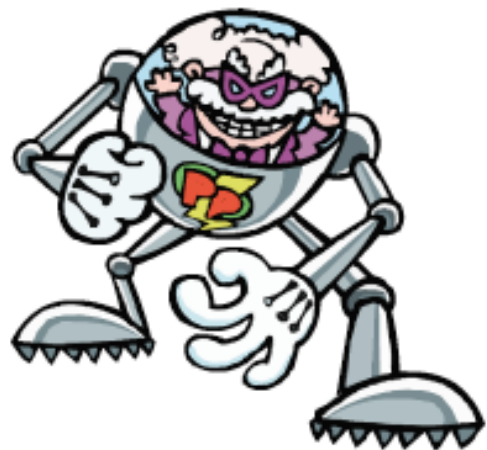
Both that and Pilkey's book contain a character disciplining an unruly pet named Sulu using a paddle that says "BAD SULU." I have not seen anyone else mention this. I may be the only one who cares.) This twofer is truly epic, but even more so is Pilkey's inclusion of the "squishy," a prank almost sacred in its simplicity. Google it.

4. Perilous Plot of Professor Poopypants (#4)

We have now entered the "classic" tier. Professor Poopypants is a fantastic villain, largely because Pilkey doesn't just draw him in broad strokes. Pippy P. Poopypants just wants to show the world his inventions, and everyone just laughs at his ridiculous-ass name. Unbelievably, the only place that will hire him is Jerome Horwitz Elementary School, where the laughing makes him madder and madder until, as usual, George and Harold push him past the point of no return with a comic book. His name-changing system—a really nice interactive feature, along with the usual Flip-o-Rama antics—is hilarious and a lot of fun. (Mine's "Doofus Picklelips." I know you were wondering.) Moreover, it's genuinely affecting to see Poopypants trying to get people to feel the pain he feels, even if he is fucking about with shrink & growth rays and changing people's names. Speaking of shrink & growth rays, these seemingly tropey villainous weapons turn out to be fantastic, resulting in some great comic moments like a giant



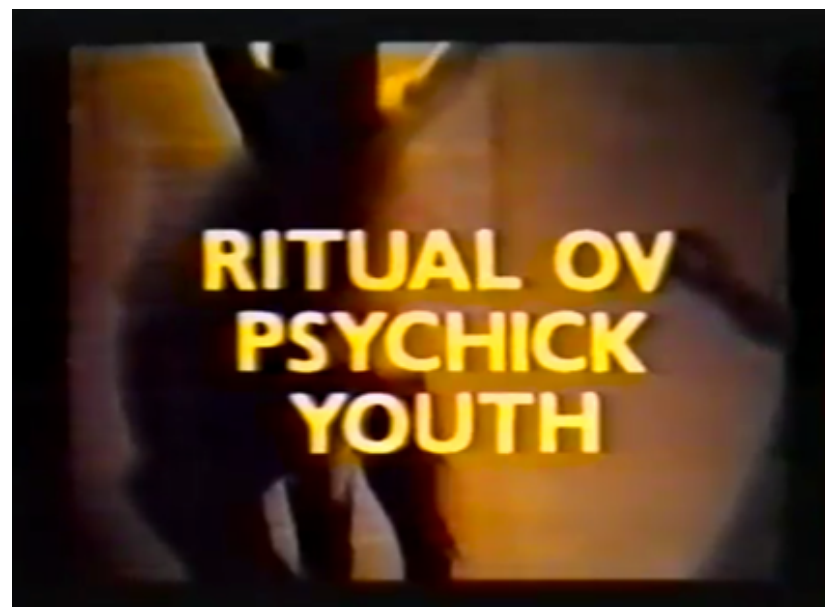
Captain Underpants fighting Poopypants in a robot, or a tiny George and Harold dodging animals and other larger-than-life hazards. Aside from the main plot, I love George and Harold's prank sequence in this book; it's one of the most elaborate, and its payoff is hysterical. I can also tell that Pilkey had an especially good time writing this one. He had to have known how gangster it is to put "Poopypants" on the cover of a book that's gonna move copies.



The hooded man, strapped up against the raw cellar wall is whipped, taunted, and splashed with fluid. He writhes against his restraints, but not in any sort of agony. The next ten or so minutes are just a parade of images and actions: bloody feet, scarified flesh, genitals rubbed in faces, fading video picture, strange instruments sharp and dull alike. All sorts of desperate, yet enthusiastic degeneracy pointing toward some higher aim and enlightenment. We can only grasp at ideas as flashes of mutual violence and hardcore pornography point to the concept of flesh as a palette for transcendence. Corporeality itself effaced to test the limits of the body and mind.

If that all sounds too eggheaded and vague, I'm still struggling to find words for the raw viscosity on display as a group of TOPY devotees happily violate one another for the camera. By the time they have the hooded man sprawled on an altar and take their crude scalpel to his flesh for the umpteenth time, I wondered if existence as I understood it didn't seem so very silly. I still don't have an answer, but the flashes of wide-open wounds and self-inserted catheters didn't inspire further consideration.

Somewhere near the half-hour point, the lilting piano soundtrack is replaced with agonized horns and random chiming noises, just as the frenzied whipping and squirming of the ritual switch to the careful practice of ritual disfigurement and bloodletting. As violent as it all should be, something about the participants' enjoyment makes it seem downright tranquil. The oddest thought one could ever have watching a screen filled with figures smearing their dripping fluids across one another and every filthy surface.



They take the phallic/blade metaphor to its logical conclusion, in several ways, and everyone seems so certain and lucid as they enact the most barbaric rituals. At some point the music becomes clanging, frenzied percussion mixed with incessant, melodic chiming. I wasn't offended, or even horrified, but instead felt like an intruder in a realm I was not welcomed into. But for my trespass, I was forced to follow it to the end. Around this point they turned the bound man over to start on his back, having scarred nearly his entire torso. Moans join the audio as puckering orifices, raised welts and inserted objects dominate the screen. Blood is the theme, withdrawn from some and splashed eagerly onto others.

You can't help but notice how precise the editing is; it's too deliberate to just dismiss out of hand as a basement torture freakshow. Even the few graspable concepts—Christian mockery, flesh/body/blood sacraments—aren't enough to ground you in the experience. Parts are even shot through blood-smeared glass for the most grotesque aesthetic flair imaginable. This is Kenneth Anger on a death trip, splayed out before a video camera. Then the Virgin Mary flashes into frame, cutting off another round of mainlined blood injections, and I can't say I was upset to see more familiar desecration for a change.

I don't think I've ever seen something as extreme yet non-incessant as this. It centers upon labored, deliberate transgression, moving beyond violation as a baseline into a realm of untapped indulgence. *August Underground* and other faux-snuff shocker tapes are a barrage of offenses and images, but none have the stamina to present four hours of unfettered assault. This is real, and was carefully planned and repeated any number of times. It's probable that this is more dangerous and significant as a result of the clear mockery and utility of outright propaganda. Hour one was a trip through an existence that most would find appalling and miserable, deviant with no function, but it was a hell of a way to get things moving. Part two proved to be something completely at odds with the ritual, and was somehow more effective for it.

Part II: San Diego Dispatch

After a minute or two of intermission, TOPY swings right back into deep-creep mode for the weirdest hour of all: a full, uninterrupted hour of sleazy staged voyeurism, credited as a report from TOPY's San Diego chapter. This dispatch starts with gritty Super 8 cruising footage, as young boys are filmed running in the streets, skateboarding, and hanging out on corners. They get to the point a hell of a lot quicker with part two, and that's a big reason why it sinks in and gets under your skin so much more. They adopt a shaky POV style, driving around the city streets, and spending even more time loitering around grungy, underlit hotel rooms. Found footage features prominently, with much attention going to television footage of accidents on news broadcasts, police procedural snippets, and audio of various radio reports. Several

very specific character constraints, most notably Underpants' lack of superpowers. Although this would be changed later in the series, it's interesting to see how much fun the characters and story can be without the use of too many crazy abilities or esoteric story elements. George and Harold feel like real middle-schoolers, always making each other laugh and being up to mischievous hijinks. Next to the series' more ridiculous installments, however, the OG *Captain Underpants* is surprisingly serious in tone, and often delivered with a weight that perhaps distracts from the light tone of the rest of the series. Contrary to George and Harold's elaborate and creative pranks in later novels, their tricks here against the football team are fairly plausible, and the shock of them being filmed—a realistic consequence—is the last thing one expects. The dualism between Mr. Krupp and Captain Underpants is often played for laughs, but never are the two characters so separate as they are here. Mr. Krupp is genuinely cruel, even menacing, whereas Captain Underpants radiates benevolence and heroic stupidity. I'm not sure how I feel about the *deus ex machina*; Captain Underpants stops our villain, the short-lived but really quite amusing Dr. Diaper, by throwing his underwear at him. Those poor boys had to see that dude's dick for at least a few seconds, even if Dav Pilkey drew him wearing a barrel on the next few pages. Of course the series would need to start somewhere, and all credit to Pilkey for taking time to ensure his audience understands all the rules of the universe before upping the ante. Nevertheless, the best installments transcend this one. (One fantastic detail: in the UK, Dr. Diaper is called "Dr. Nappy." Hell yeah.)

6./5. Big, Bad Battle of the Bionic Booger Boy (#6/#7)

This two-part saga—*Night of the Nasty Nostril Nuggets & Revenge of the Ridiculous Robo-Boogers*, for the curious—is a very exciting time in the *Captain Underpants* series. You can feel Dav Pilkey jumping the shark in real time, and it's fucking awesome, but it also retains that classic *Captain Underpants* charm. When George and Harold write a comic making fun of Melvin Sneedly, their asshole/nerd/narc classmate, Melvin tries to use his new invention to combine himself with a robot (it worked on his pet hamster). However, when boogers from a sneeze combine with him and the robot, Melvin becomes the Bionic Booger Boy, probably the most actively disgusting villain in the series. I love the detail that the school silently gives Melvin his own drinking fountain because it's just covered in booger juice; Pilkey renders every glob of snot with clear relish. A fight between Melvin, his cyborg hamster Sulu, and Captain Underpants ensues after Melvin goes Hulk mode at a field trip to the tissue factory. Eventually George and Harold turn him back into Melvin, but accidentally switch his brains with Mr. Krupp (Underpants alter ego and all) and create the Robo-Boogers. To set things right, George, Harold & "Mr. Melvin" gotta do some real shark jumpage: this is the first book to introduce time travel, a concept which apparently crippled later novels in the series. But it works fine here, offering enough of a silly mind-bend not to distract from the great jokes, like Melvin's superhero logo reading "BM." (Real deep cut: Dav Pilkey must be a fan of Mr. Show with Bob and David, specifically the iguana sketch in S2E4.

Man is, it's probably not productive to discuss those. I also won't go into detail about the film, other than to say that you should definitely watch it. Let's get it.

12.-9. Terrifying Re-Turn of Tippy Tinkletrousers (#9) / Revolting Revenge of the Radioactive Robo-Boxers (#10) / Tyrannical Retaliation of the Turbo Toilet 2000 (#11) / Sensational Saga of Sir Stinks-A-Lot (#12)

I ain't read these, since I quit being a middle schooler before #9 dropped, but they sound wavy. According to Wikipedia (y'all ever use that site? It's free), books 6 through 12 tell a fairly continuous story. *Captain Underpants* books traditionally end with a cliffhanger, but apparently this is one large saga within a saga. Sick.

8. Preposterous Plight of the Purple Potty People (#8)

I supposedly read this one, and vaguely recall things about it (particularly the comic about the old-people superheroes, Boxer Boy and Great Granny Girdle), but looking at the Wikipedia summary has me scratching my GD head. Sulu the hamster turns giant and evil, George and Harold's evil doubles from an evil timeline engage in fuckery using the "purple potty" time machine... did I even read this? I'm not 100 I did, honestly. This is on that real *Twin Peaks: The Return* type beat where it's so wavy that I'm not even sure who I am anymore. Our protagonists, George and Harold, were supposedly transferred to an alternate universe, where everything is the opposite of how it really is (school is fun and not oppressive, for instance) and have to deal with the Captain's evil doppelgänger, Captain Blunderpants. I like that George and Harold's grandparents actually become the old-people superheroes. However, this one's so low on this list partially because it's jumping the shark so much—alternate reality, time travel, doppelgängers, giant hamsters, old people superheroes, you know—and also because it relies heavily on older characters and concepts either being subverted or just reintroduced. For instance, bringing back Tippy Twinkletrousers (fka Professor Poopypants) is a decent idea, but the whole scenario doesn't smack of the same madcap spirit it did when Pilkey first introduced him. Either way, I'm still too faded to remember if I actually read this. The time travel business must've gotten so complicated that I'm experiencing some kushed-out parallel universe type shit IRL. Shout out David Lynch, call me Jerry Horne (swag swag).

7. OG (#1)

The first *Captain Underpants* novel is small, and perhaps not as exciting or scatological as later installments, but it is the urtext, and shit is downright totemic. After being threatened with what is essentially yearlong detention and slave labor, George and Harold order a 3-D Hypno Ring from a magazine and use it on their principal, Mr. Krupp. They turn him into Captain Underpants, their beloved superhero character from the comics they draw, and shit gets predictably hilarious when he proves to be too determined (and fast) for them to catch. For this novel, Pilkey was working within some

drugged-out, dazed teenage skater boys lounge around the filthy motel room watching the tube, giving the whole segment the vibe of Dean Corll's home movies.

I wanted to get up, to break up the stifling ugliness the motel's woodgrain finish and the rotten shooting gallery vibes of the whole thing, but something about it was so distressingly compelling. This whole portion of the tape stands in direct contrast to the ritual fervor of the last segment, completely at odds even with its meticulous bloodletting. In fact, the initial absence of fluids somehow enhanced my enervation watching the film play out. It's just shirtless teens, shot up and heads lolling, sitting on dirty rugs and interacting with whoever may be behind the camera. Just as before, I'm fairly certain that nothing here was faked, each moment playing out with a sort of documentary authenticity that's all the more disturbing in its mundanity.



Some clever edits alleviate the unease, with each glimpse of the boys preparing to shoot up, or picking at open wounds being denied at the last moment. The cameraman continually asserts his presence, and it's hard to miss the insinuation of control over the whole process. More to the point, the very existence of this footage, and its deliberate affect provides all the justification for its inclusion here. All that matters, regardless of how the impact is achieved, is that the

segment has some persistent effect upon the audience. It really is hard to argue that point as the camera lingers on the three boys, alternately dozing off, getting shot-up by offscreen figures, or cutting one another with dull blades. Nothing quite resembles the volume of mutilation in the first ritual, nor is the camerawork as busy or creative. What remains is an unaffected, interminable observation of commonplace, if presumably degenerate behavior allowed to play out generally uninhibited. There's no constructed sanctity, or graspable function for the figures onscreen, they simply do what they would have any other day. The only intruder is the predatory cameraman, and we're stuck in his eyes, if not his mind, by watching the boys' interactions. Before too long, he suits himself up in scrubs and begins to directly interact with the boys.

A lot of words come to mind watching this segment: snuff, pornography, transgression, and more, but none of them really capture the unsettling effect of the finished product. The minimalistic approach shouldn't be this effective, as everything is druggy and placid and easygoing. But the wide-open gaps in the action leave too much room for thinking, too much time for the content to really get at you. There seems to be no

purpose behind the documentation, no callbacks to earlier or later segments of First Transmission, and no outright propaganda. It's just pure unease stripped of context. At some level that speaks to the tape itself and its lingering effect and mystery nearly forty years on. Something compelled me to order it when I saw it listed, just as something drew various others to invest four hours of their time into this fringe experiment.

The scrub-suited man returns to the screen with a variety of strange machines and devices for the boys to engage. Just like that, technology and the illusion of scientific precision and sterility replaces the primitive ritualism of the first hour. The only threads between the two sections are the boys offering themselves up as specimens, just like the hooded man. It still makes me wonder why the subdued, almost staged-looking surgeries implied here look and feel so much worse than the real blood rituals I'd just watched. The more I think, I realize it's all in the intentions behind the content itself, that the effectiveness of the scene was a real marvel. Every trap they laid, I was willingly led into and asked for more. Anyone can be fully aware that something is fake, know the entire history behind it, dismiss it after the fact. But they can't deny the effect it has on them in the moment itself.



A Captain Underpants Power Ranking

by MC Freeman

Look, I'll be real with you: I've not read any of these books in many years, and like 4 of 'em I've not read at all. But Big Vin Vader wanted my *Captain Underpants* power ranking, so here you go, dude.

Intro

I'm very happy to deviate from the "normal" (i.e. surreal/egghead) children's series I've covered in issues past to give y'all a rundown of this delightful saga. Dav Pilkey is one of Ohio's finest authors and illustrators, and he brings a whole comic-book universe to life in his magical *Captain Underpants* series, which ran from 1997 until about 2015. These books are a lot of fun for readers of all ages, and you best believe Pilkey's humor goes way deeper than simple toilet jokes (you gonna get a lot of those too). If comic books within comic books, highly alliterative titles, ridiculously named characters, Super Power Juice, Flip-o-Rama, and time travel aren't your cup of tea, I don't know why you even picked up this damn zine in the first place.

There's plenty of supplementary material—the *Extra-Crunchy Book o' Fun* & its sequel spring to mind—as well as multiple spinoffs, including *Super Diaper Baby* and a full *Dog Man* series—but, seeing as I didn't read the last 5 books and I don't even know who Dog

- Shayna Baszler vs. Kairi Sane (NXT TakeOver: Brooklyn IV)
- MJF vs. Nate Webb (GCW Joey Janela's Lost In New York)
- Josh Briggs vs. Curt Stallion (Beyond Wrestling Please Come Back)
- Marko Stunt vs. Orange Cassidy (Beyond Wrestling Please Come Back)
- Adam Cole vs. Ricochet vs. Pete Dunne (NXT 472)
- The Undisputed Era vs. War Raiders (NXT 473)
- Nick Gage vs. G-Raver (Beyond Wrestling It's Alive)
- Tomohiro Ishii vs. Minoru Suzuki (NJPW Power Struggle)



Mexican radio takes over the audio, and I realize just how much of a canned, short-wave radio feel the whole thing has. Regarding what comes next, I don't have a whole lot of information, but there is just enough to get a sense that it too is real. Even that potential for uncertainty makes the procedure no less visceral or stunning. Shots of Mexican maps and highway exit signs imply a geographical shift; a new motel room provides a fresh setting, albeit one no less filthy or oppressive. The three boys have been reduced somewhere along the way to just one, the same we saw implanted with the crude electronics a few minutes earlier by the cameraman/surgeon. Laying calm and still, whether high or incapacitated by the unnamed electronics in his arm, the boy offers himself as a willing canvas for the man in scrubs. His demeanor doesn't change as the man runs his hands over his skin, nor as he reaches for a scalpel and braces the boy for the surgery.

I'd never seen a real castration, nor did I expect my first to be so calm, so practiced and welcomed. It passes like a blip on the tape, two or three seconds out of four hours, and it still stands out as perhaps the most assaulting visual on the whole thing. The boy was so calm, as unflinching in receiving the wound just as the camera was in presenting it. He seemed so ready and prepared that I don't know how to feel beyond mere opinion, and even that seems pretty useless in the long run. Returning somewhat to a ritual mode, the elder man subs out his scrubs for a black robe, and the somehow-healed boy pisses out of his new stub as the standby skull screen fades over the image.

"Bryon Gysin's Dream Machine" is next, all Middle Eastern music and manipulated video imagery for a few minutes. But its whole psychedelic pastiche was distractingly over-the-top, filler coming after the subdued fuckery of the last hour. I don't really know what else to say about this hour of the tape, I just know that it was the most uncomfortable thing I've seen pretty much all year. Even with the knowledge that the boys shooting up and hanging around the motel rooms was planned and just another day in the life, the extent of the entire section is the hardest to take. Just like the first Ritual, the minutiae and length of the dispatch give it far more impact than any tossed-off art-shock project. It was something of a relief that the tape's third hour broke away from ritual tableau and deviant action. Then again, it forced me to more fully reckon with a historical atrocity than I'd ever felt the need to do previously.

Part III: "Thank You Dad"

Exhaustion and restlessness were setting in around this point, but I had made a commitment to finish this thing in one sitting. The first few minutes of the third section caught my attention all over again, jumping right back into the well of propaganda. I spent the next forty-plus minutes entirely with Rev. Jim Jones and his near-thousand followers. The Jonestown massacre isn't something I've given much thought, but I certainly understand its deviant appeal for others. TOPY's presentation of the events didn't give me much time to reflect on my own opinions on the matter, as they decided to isolate the infamous audio tape of the Reverend's final sermon over

various distorted images and blown-up clips from a TV movie adaptation. Put in this context, everything seems so reined in despite the massive stakes, with only disembodied voices and testimonials offering the starkest possible representation of that final night in Guyana.

That said, the fervency captured on the tape, both in Jones' sermonizing and the wailing appraisals from his devotees is completely removed from the placidity of TOPY's bodily rituals. The actual content of Jones' speech is just as disturbing as the events which followed, as he gives passionate accounts of cancer removal via emesis, as well as details of his so-called healing and brainwashing techniques. This isn't something I'd ever go out of my way to hear—and I hadn't in all the years prior to this—but you can't deny the real power in Jones' conviction, and you can't fail to see how he convinced so many people to follow along. The only visuals are blurred and distorted faces, tranquil in demeanor. The perfect contrast to the previous segment, which featured smears of unrecognizable audio to match the uncomfortably clarity of the visuals.

It seems incredible that the tape wasn't destroyed or sealed away, anything to deny Jones his legacy after his death. It somehow found its way out, and nothing else matters in the end, the Reverend's existence continues on. It gets to be heavy duty stuff as it progresses: detailed accounts of knife mutilations, poisonings, and more laid over with Jones' manic giggling and his cackling followers. There are plenty of audio manipulations, I'd guess on TOPY's part, as words are stretched and layered, chants emerging from relative silence. It all reaches a horrendous fever pitch as Jones instructs his legion to "let the night roar." It's hard to deny the chilling power of that moment, awful as it may be.

Following this, the visuals take their most concrete form with scenes cribbed from the television adaptation *Guyana Tragedy*. People run across the screen only to be shot, a man is dragged and beaten, dead faces are shown in unblinking close-ups. The whole vibe is like the worst footage from some obscure Mondo movie, stolen and presented



Research Anderson's Most Slept-On Matches of 2018:

-Ethan Page vs. PCO (Black Label Pro We're Not The Mounties)

-Dominic Garrini vs. Juice Robinson (AIW Death Rowe)

-Matt Riddle vs. Keith Lee (PWG Neon Nights)

-Nick Gage vs. Rickey Shane Page (Beyond Wrestling Abbondanza)

-Jonathan Gresham vs. Martin Stone vs. Tracy Williams (Beyond Wrestling Abbondanza)

-Brody King vs. Douglas James vs. Jake Atlas vs. Eli Everfly (PWG Time Is A Flat Circle)

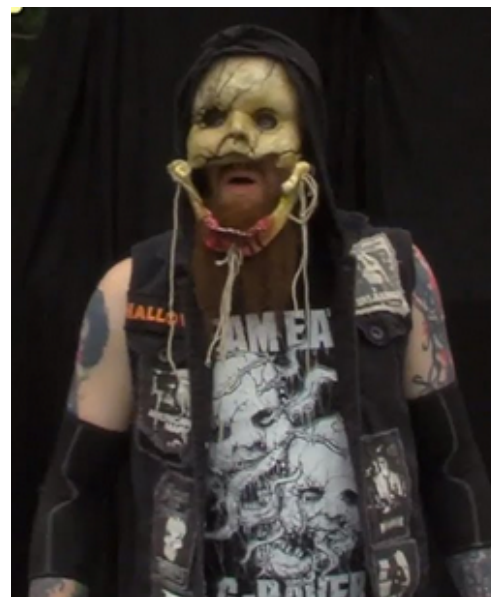
-Will Ospreay vs. Adam Brooks (PWG Time Is A Flat Circle)

-Ringkampf vs. Violence Unlimited (PWG All Star Weekend 14 Night 1)

-Jonathan Gresham vs. Puma King (Beyond Wrestling Welcome Home Night 1)

-Tracy Williams vs. Joey Janela (Beyond Wrestling Welcome Home Night 2)

-Seth Rollins vs. The Miz (WWE Backlash)



-Joey Janela vs. Ciclope (GCW The Untouchables)

-AR Fox vs. Myron Reed (Evolve 105)

-Marty Scurll vs. SHO (NJPW Best of the Super Juniors Final Night)

-Josh Briggs vs. Jonathan Gresham (Beyond Wrestling All Day)

-The Undisputed Era vs. Oney Lorcan & Danny Burch (NXT TakeOver: Chicago 2)

-WALTER vs. Darby Allin (Evolve 106)

whips, blades, the grungy basement altar, but everything is now laid to rest. Gothic font offers an “Introduction to TOPY” as elliptical flashes of skulls, the bound man, and POV shots of a new tabernacle in the basement cut in. It’s all like a ritual in sketch format, giving us the vibes of what could happen but no follow-through as the tape ends.

Conclusion, of sorts

So that’s it, four hours of my life and attention span. I don’t have much to offer in the way of summation or final thoughts, because in a lot of ways I’m still processing what exactly was going on. All I can really say is that it was an unsuccessful, but provocative, exercise in consciousness-expansion. Ultimately, it’s hard to pay attention and take away the imbued messages, thus the tape’s most infamous moments are what really stick out. Its reputation makes perfect sense to me now. I doubt anyone will be motivated to watch this thing after reading this, but let me know if you really want to make the plunge. I guess I’d sit through it all as well one more time.



with the most sinister context being constructed out of the pieces. The audio is all feverish shouts from the followers stating their readiness to die, calmer than ever before. Just as the visuals reach their peak of artifice—mass graves, spilled Kool-Aid on white sheets—the reality of people facing their subdued, actual deaths sets in and you can’t help but ponder which channel seems more authentic. The manipulation of constructed images and authentic audio here is damn near masterful, even if it left me wondering just what the aims behind it were. You question why anyone even bothered to recreate the visuals for mass audiences when no act of imagination could touch on the power of the genuine audio. And just as all of these questions really began to percolate, the tape cuts to an intermission designed to distract the viewer’s thoughts.

A woman sits by a windowsill and dresses herself for a moment, before the skull intertitle returns. Distorted narration offers more information on TOPY as an organization, detailing the use of “we” to distinguish true individuals as opposed to “I,” which is outdated and inauthentic. As with every other instructional segment, the audio is so poor and the message so brief that it’s hard to take much meaning away. Especially since the final few minutes of hour three are the most infamous in the entire tape.



SXXX-80, a self-contained short film courtesy of Genesis P. Orridge collaborator and San Francisco native Monte Cazazza, is the part of the tape I was most aware of before

this viewing. I'd been looking forward to seeing it in context, as every other reference you're likely to find to the clip is as a standalone piece or segment of another video mixtape. It isn't hard to see why, as it contains some of the more striking and lasting visuals in the entire project, with Cazazza's face in a clear, skin-like mask, and a confrontational dominatrix standing out from the start. She trims her pubic hair as Monte blows smoke to fill his mask and further distort his features. As the clouds seep from the mask's eye slits, the dom plays with a massive millipede, eventually placing it on her genitals and letting it crawl about. She remains calm and composed throughout the whole thing.

This one looks like Super-8 again, and whether in the context of *First Transmission* or not, feels like a dispatch from some subcultural void most folks couldn't even imagine. This is especially true once Cazazza starts poking around in the gaping wound in his penis and pulls out some sort of squirming worm. It's the vilest image in the entire thing, and knowing it was coming hardly prepared me. Easily the moment which made me most thankful for the shit fidelity of the tape. In fact, it's so bad that the next scene of the dominatrix atomizing her own blood onto a mirror has no effect at all. The third chapter ends with her staring into her distorted reflection as the short's name burns away on the decayed video image. It's all underscored by a particularly vicious track of whirring industrial noise, no doubt one of Cazazza's own compositions.



Part IV: Interviews and Psychoporn

Whether by design or sheer resignation to Cazazza's perverse display, the rest of the tape forsakes visceral shocks for more meditative material. The first chunk of the final hour is a replayed television interview with Genesis P. Orridge and another TOPY member on some UK talk program. They discuss the organization's mission statement and the powerful energy of sexuality. All the while they cut the striking figures of skinheads crossed with Hare Krishnas—Ben Sherman shirts, clerical collars, and shaved heads with rattail braids. All of the sinister power of the earlier segments is gone, the audiovisual suggestion and layered intentions replaced with an explicit desire to be



understood, to communicate honestly. The expression of ambiguity that functioned so well earlier has been replaced with the artists explaining themselves in plain terms. I doubt they made much of an impact on the prime-time audience, but they sure as hell tried.

This hour's middle portion is a visual experiment called "Psychoporn," which is a fairly apt title even as it failed to hold my interest. For over

twenty minutes, TOPY present washed-out psychedelic visuals, dancing flames and distorted honking audio tones. In a way—at least initially—the whole thing recalls Stan Brakhage's 1980s era work like *The Dante Quartet*, but on a much darker level. Everything is warped and suggestive, shapes performing familiar motions just beyond identification. Then all at once the pornography underneath the affect reveals itself, completely reconfigured into neon confusion.

There's nothing stimulating about the visuals once this is clear, and especially not as the underlying images become progressively clearer. This has the least impact of anything on the tape, moving away from the visual and physical reduction of self as presented in the first two hours. In those cases, the mutilation and stimulation was truly and honestly experienced by those onscreen, the tape itself acting as nothing more than a visual record of transformational incidents. For the audience, the visual record itself is the key, and the reproduction of these actions via video and film created a quantifiable object to be engaged. It is not the actions themselves that matter to the non-participants, it's the physical tape and its visual image. And it seems highly unlikely that distorted fuck-images are of value to anyone; they certainly offer no true subversion. There are countless arguments to be made that everything on the tape is pointless indulgence, and I would be willing to concede that. But even as I acknowledge that the other images have some sway over me, I have no trouble calling out the pointlessness of the whole "Psychoporn" exercise.

Finally, the seesawing genitals and hyperactive colors give way to another blank intertitle. "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." They make good on the implicit threat here, diving back into the first tape's ritual imagery as a tranquil piano track and somber voice recount the Temple's purpose. This is still distorted to all hell, and I could make out every fifth word if I was lucky. We see skulls,